



VIGILANT TIMES

Vol. 2, Issue 1

18th Military Police Brigade Newsletter

February 2006



Mission complete

18th Military Police Brigade home after
year-long deployment

BRIGADE BRIEFS

• March Birthdays

01- SPC Alma Ortiz
02- SPC Steven Dionne
04- LTC Michael Blahovec
12- CPT Brian Boston
17- SPC Bradley Swope
17- CPT Michael Capps
21- PFC Daniel Blottenberger
23- SGT Lynne Steely
29- MAJ Dean Lewis

• A Hail and Farewell dinner was held February 15 at the Brauhaus Zum Ritter in Schwetzingen, for 25 departing members of the 18th MP Brigade Headquarters and five incoming soldiers. Look for photos in the March issue of the Vigilant Times.

• Five brigade headquarters soldiers will be departing for Warrior Leader Course March 15 in Grafenwoehr, Germany. Look for the story and photos to come. For more information about WLC visit the 7th Army NCO Academy website at:

www.hqjmtc.army.mil/NCO_Academy



SNOW DAY!

Spc. Brandon Beck, Sgt. Andrew Paasch and Spc. Jasbleidick Chancay admire a picturesque scene after Mannheim's biggest snowfall of the season.

We are family

Soldiers of the 709th MP Battalion are currently deployed to Iraq and need our support as they continue the fight against terrorism. Please show these warriors how much we admire their hard work and dedication by sending them a carepackage.

Please address carepackage to:



**HHD 709TH MP BN
FOB MAREZ
APO AE 09334**

VIGILANT TIMES

Produced by the 18th Military Police Brigade
Public Affairs Office, Mannheim, Germany
APO AE 09058 Phone: DSN 314-382-5618

The Vigilant Times is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the U.S. Government or the Department of Defense. Approximately 300 electronic versions of the Vigilant Times are circulated monthly.

Col. James Brown.....Brigade Commander
Maj. Rob Simmons.....Public Affairs Officer
Sgt. Lynne Steely.....Photojournalist/Public Affairs NCOIC
Pfc. Daniel Blottenberger.....Photojournalist

COMMANDERS CORNER

By Col. James B. Brown

18th Military Police Brigade Commander

Greetings friends, families, and comrades of the 18th Military Police Brigade! Congratulations to our



families and soldiers who have completed such a successful year in Iraq and Afghanistan! In both fronts of the Global War on Terrorism, our EVER VIGILANT soldiers have given a tremendous accounting of themselves and have made a true impact in our winning the war. As I write this, we are in the throes of final preparations for the return of the 212th MP Company "Dragoons" and the 92nd MP Company "Rock Solid!" from tremendously successful deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. These companies have served over very expansive areas and have done a terrific job of supporting the 173rd Airborne Brigade and SETAF.

As with all our deployments, our families and Rear Detachments have been the true heroes of our brigade. Their selfless service to each other and to our country has truly enabled our warriors to fight to win and to make a positive difference in the lives of freedom loving people in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In addition to our plans for redeployment, the 709th MP Battalion "WARRIORS" continue to work alongside the Iraqi Police in Northern Iraq to make this the decisive year for standing up the police and improving the security situation in Iraq. 2006 is "The Year of the Police" in Iraq and our Warriors are at the lead of this fight. In addition to the Warrior Battalion, the 527th MP Company "Strike

Deep" continues to support the 43rd MP Brigade in all theater level detention operations and is doing a fantastic job of supporting Brig. Gen. Kevin R. McBride as his cavalry element to support the brigade main effort. The 615th MP Company "Bloodhounds" are also supporting the Iraqi Police operations working in territory that is very familiar to those of us who have just returned. The Bloodhounds and Strike Deep Warriors continue to do fantastic work to continue to win the war in Iraq.

Back in Germany, the 18th MP Brigade current main effort is focused on maintenance of vehicles and equipment; command supply discipline programs to ensure that our property is well accounted for, safeguarded and that we use our resources responsibly; and safety. We are focusing safety efforts on drivers training and accident avoidance. Common driving is in fact the most dangerous activity for all our soldiers and families who are not deployed. This is the same in the U.S. as well as Europe. However, the added challenges of driving tactical vehicles in Europe on public highways are a stark reminder to ensure that our operators are fully trained and that our equipment is safe to operate. Remember, that drinking alcohol and driving is a mix that is guaranteed to ruin your life and the lives of others. Fatigue behind the wheel can be just as dangerous as alcohol. We have had a tremendous record of safety here in Europe, as well as in Iraq and Afghanistan, and I want to thank you all personally for all that you have done and are doing to ensure that we all remain safe.

Our units that have returned are going through a lot of turnover with the lifting of Stop-Loss orders. For

example, in the HQ, we just had a farewell dinner for 25 teammates and a welcome for five new members. We need to ensure that we farewell our departing heroes and that we stay in touch with them and continue to play a mentoring role in their development and future success. Remember our newest teammates as well...the future success of our brigade will belong to them. Bring them onboard efficiently and help them to learn our standards and disciplines right up front. Reenlistment in the brigade is going tremendously well. I am so thankful for our newest GREATEST GENERATION! One thing I would like to stress again to all our members as you consider reenlistment, is to consider strongly reenlisting to remain in Germany. Our top quality dental care here, versus having to pay for dental coverage in the U.S., availability of medical help, our COLA, our government quarters, our close fellowship and working relationships, are all outstanding benefits of serving overseas...not to mention the travel opportunities of Europe when we are home, combine to make Germany a great option for your future. With the significant change going on in Germany in the coming years, remember that the 18th MP Brigade is an enduring unit in Germany and will continue to remain here. There will be some movement of some companies, but the brigade will remain in Germany for the foreseeable future!

Thanks again for all that you have done and are doing for our country. God Bless you all and God Bless the 18th MP Brigade!

EVER VIGILANT!

Col. Jim Brown, VIGILANT 6

18th MP receives official welcome home

Pfc. Daniel D. Blottenberger

18th Military Police Brigade Public Affairs Office

MANNHEIM, Germany - The 18th Military Police Brigade out of Mannheim, Germany was officially welcomed home from its year-long deployment to Southwest Asia during a ceremony held at the Sullivan Barracks gymnasium January 26. After its return from Operation Iraqi Freedom I the brigade set out for Iraq once again on Nov. 30, 2004 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III with only nine months to prepare. While in Iraq the 18th's mission was to secure the main supply routes in and around Baghdad in partnership with the Iraqi Police in Aut Kut, Al Hillah, Ad Diwaniya, Karbala and Najaf.

The 18th MP Brigade transformed the Iraqi Highway Patrol from a regional organization of 300 patrolmen to a federal law enforcement agency with national jurisdiction, a new academy, a

national headquarters in Baghdad and 1,600 members. The brigade initially operated detention facilities at Camp Bucca, in Southern Iraq, and Abu Ghraib, but ultimately took control of all

detention operations in Iraq including the establishment of Fort Suse, the newest facility in Northern Iraq.



Spc. Bradley Swope holds it steady as Brigade Commander, Col. James Brown and Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Shelley officially unfurl the brigade colors during their welcome home ceremony on Sullivan Barracks January 26.

warriors. Warriors that are the best the world has ever seen."

Sanchez presented the 18th, the most decorated military police brigade in the army, with the Valorous Unit Award for its participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom I, adding one more streamer to the unit's already highly decorated guidon. The Valorous Unit Award is awarded to units of the Armed Forces of the United States for extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy of the United States.

"You have added another great chapter to your unit's history," Sanchez told the soldiers of the 18th.

The brigade has participated in numerous operations around the world since its activation in 1966 including Vietnam, Bosnia, Herzegovina, the Balkans, Sarajevo



V Corps Commander, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, speaks to the troops of the 18th MP Brigade during their welcome home ceremony.

"Today you deserve to be honored as you conclude a long and arduous mission. I am deeply honored and humbled as I stand before you," said V Corps commander, Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez. "Today standing before me is a battle tested, proven unit composed of hardened

and Afghanistan.

"As you deployed you carried a tremendous burden. That was the legacy of valor and excellence that your predecessors had displayed in prior conflicts," said Sanchez. Sanchez commended the soldiers of the 18th on their performance throughout the deployment under less than optimal conditions.

"The skills and instincts that you carried into battle were near flawless, having been honed for the rigors and demands of war in a matter of less than 10 months," said Sanchez.

"Today gives us an opportunity to look back and contemplate the successes of the 18th MP Brigade during a year in battle. The assessment of your corps' commander is that you performed magnificently," said Sanchez.

"You represent the strength of America and your dedication to duty and your willingness to sacrifice is what makes this unit, our army and America what it is today, the best in the world," Sanchez added.

The cost of service in Iraq was felt in the loss of 11 soldiers and over 100 soldiers wounded during the deployment.

Col. James B. Brown, 18th MP brigade commander, attributed the success of the unit's mission to the support the brigade received from the families and rear detachment back in Germany while the unit was deployed.

"We were so blessed with the dedication from the families we had supporting us while we were in Iraq. I have never been supported by a finer family readiness group," said Brown.

Following the ceremony, a reception was held at The Cove on Sullivan Barracks for the soldiers of the brigade and their families with food and a wide variety of activities.

THE TIMES...



Pfc. Daniel D. Blotenberg

THEY ARE A CHANGIN'

From left to right: Sgt. Joshua Klassen, Spc. Larry Blake and Sgt. Alan Suskey show off their new Army Combat Uniform (ACU). The new uniform was officially unveiled June 14, 2004 during the Army's 229th birthday celebration at the Pentagon. There has not been a major change to U.S. Army uniforms since the early 1980's when the BDU was introduced.

The design and color change are a direct result of the functionality of the uniform for soldiers in combat such as easily accessible pockets while wearing body armor.

The new uniform will save soldiers money as well as time due to removable velcro patches and desert boots, no shine required. There were a total of 18 changes made to the uniform in all.

PROMOTIONS AND REUPS



Spc. Donald Koon reenlisted February 10 for 4 years. Capt. Michael Capps administered the oath.



Sgt. Andrew Paasch reenlisted February 1 for 4 years. Col. James Brown administered the oath.



Spc. Jasbleidick Chancay reenlisted February 10 for two years. Capt. Whitney Jensen administered the oath.



Spc. Courtney Townes reenlisted February 24 for six years. Capt. Wayne Ludwig administered the oath.



Pfc. Steven Dionne was promoted to Specialist on Feb. 1. Here he poses with Company Commander, Capt. Wayne Ludwig.



Pfc. Lonnie Coleman was promoted to Specialist on Feb. 1. Here he poses with Company Commander, Capt. Wayne Ludwig.

709th Military Police Battalion “Warriors”

Lt. Col. Thomas Blair

709th Military Police Battalion Commander

Recently, here in Mosul, we celebrated just how far this city has come since November of 2004. For in November of 2004, the insurgents basically took over the city, with the police stations collapsing. Now, the police are in charge, are respected by the citizens of this great city, and are proactively removing criminals/insurgents off the streets. What an awesome feat! There is still plenty of work to do, and we along with our IP brothers know this very well. But, I am completely confident we as a team are up to the task. The IP's have

the right mindset and their level of proficiency is greatly improving everyday, with the assistance and outstanding mentorship conducted by our Military Police and Security Force troops.

This year has been deemed the “Year of Police” in the theater of operations. Therefore, the battalion's focus is implementing the Police Transition Team concept across our area of operations. This new mission set for the battalion I know will result in even greater accomplishments by our IP partners. I am excited by the

possibilities this brings and I know the Soldiers and Airmen of the battalion will excel as they partner even closer with the IP's throughout the year.

The “Warriors” look forward to the challenges which lay ahead. We all continue to serve proudly, knowing we are making a difference; we see it everyday.

“Always a Warrior”

LTC Tom Blair



courtesy of the 709th MP Battalion

Warrior ELITE

In whatever position we may hold, we will be measured by the answer to four questions - were we truly soldiers of courage...were we truly soldiers of judgment...were we truly soldiers of dedication...were we truly soldiers of **INTEGRITY**.

INTEGRITY
Integrity is the foundation of all good character. It is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. It is the quality of being truthful and fair.

TIMELINESS
Time is the most valuable thing a soldier can spend in pursuit of truth.

LOYALTY
Loyalty is the lifeblood of any organization. Everything flows from it and is nourished by it.

EXCELLENCE
The secret of joy in work is contained in one word - excellence. To know how to do something well is to enjoy it.

EFFORT
The Greatest reward of Effort is what I become

Backbone of the Army

Capt. Wayne Ludwig shakes hands with Hyon Shelley, wife of Command Sgt. Major Joseph Shelley, while presenting her with an appreciation plaque for her support during the brigade's deployment last year. A dinner was held at the Brauhaus Zum Ritter restaurant in Schwetzingen January 12 for all of the spouses of the 18th MP Brigade to honor them for their sacrifices and hard work throughout the deployment.



New Kid In Town

On Feb. 4, 2006 at 2:42 a.m. the Medina family welcomed a new member into their family. Roshanak Medina gave birth to 3060 gram, 48 centimeter long, Michael Cyrus Medina. In the photo to the left Michael's 3 year old sister Madelaine welcomes her baby brother to the family. Michael was born at the Diakonic Krankenhaus in Mannheim, Germany.

Need a Lift?

Married soldiers of the 18th MP Brigade and their spouses attended a marriage retreat at the Edelweiss Lodge and Resort in Garmisch, Germany February 6 hosted by Brigade Chaplain, Lt. Col. Thomas Evans. The four-day retreat gave the couples a chance to get to know each other again after the deployment in a low-stress environment. Here some of the attendees enjoy a cozy horse and buggy ride.



793rd MP Battalion “Spartans”



Photo courtesy of 793rd MP BN

793rd MP Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Dan McElroy and Command Sgt. Maj. Bernard McPherson unfurl the Battalion colors during an official welcome home ceremony January 27 in Bamberg. The Battalion returned to its base in Germany November 14 after a year-long deployment to Southwest Asia.



Sgt. Lynne Steely

Capt. Michael Grygar takes responsibility as the 793rd MP Battalion Headquarters Detachment commander by accepting the guidon from Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Dan McElroy. Grygar succeeded Capt. John Waters, Jr.

Thrift Savings Plan-

If you haven't already began to tuck away all that extra money you've been earning during deployment, it's never too late to start. The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is a Federal Government-sponsored retirement savings and investment plan. The TSP is a tax deferred



contribution plan. The retirement income you receive from your TSP account will depend on how much you have contributed to your account during your working years and the earnings on those contributions.

You can contribute up to 10 percent of your basic pay each pay period to your TSP account as soon as you are a member of the uniformed services. You may also contribute from one to 100 percent of any incentive pay or special pay (including bonus pay) you receive, up to the limits established by the Internal Revenue Code.

If you plan to make the military a career, The TSP can provide you with a supplemental source of retirement income in addition to your uniformed services retired pay. Just \$40 per month can add up to \$20, 959 (at 7% interest per year).

To participate in TSP you may sign up through your base finance office or MyPay account.



February is black history month

Every February, Americans celebrate Black History Month. This tribute dates back to 1926 and is credited to a Harvard scholar named Cart Woodson. The son of former slaves, Woodson dedicated his life to ensuring that black history was accurately documented. In an effort to bring national attention to the contributions of black Americans, Woodson organized the first Negro History Week and chose the second week of February in honor of the birthdays of pivotal black supporters Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. From Jackie Robinson to Tiger Woods, Harriet Tubman to Barack Obama, Black History Month pays tribute to inspirational African American past, as well as those who will continue to make history well into the future.



Martin Luther King Jr., a Baptist minister and civil rights leader born in Atlanta, Ga. When Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus in December 1955, he led the boycott of Montgomery's segregated buses for over a year. In 1957 he was chosen president of the newly formed Southern Christian Leadership Conference and he began to broaden his active role in the civil-rights struggle while advocating his nonviolent approach to achieving results. In 1959 he focused his energies to organizing protest demonstrations and marches in such cities as Birmingham, Ala. (1963), St. Augustine, Fla. (1964), and Selma, Ala. (1965). He received several attacks and threats during these years but remained strong to his beliefs.



Hank Aaron, a Mobile, Ala. native, is baseball's all-time home-run king, he played 23 years as an outfielder for the Milwaukee Braves and Milwaukee Brewers (1954-1976). He holds many of baseball's most distinguished records, including most lifetime runs batted in (2297), most years with 30 or more home runs (15), 1477 extra-base hits, 6856 total bases and most career home-runs (755). During his progress in Major league Baseball he received racist letters and threats. He was never really appreciated until he broke Babe Ruth's home-run record in 1974. He was voted National League's Most Valuable Player only once since 1957 despite his obvious statistics being deserving of the award.



Thurgood Marshall, civil-rights advocate and judge, born in Baltimore, Md. The great-grandson of a slave, he graduated as valedictorian from Howard University Law School (1933) and soon began to represent civil-rights activists. He became a counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1938, during the next 23 years he won 29 of the 32 major cases he undertook for that organization. His finest moments involved cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 which overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 and its 'separate but equal' ruling that perpetuated segregated institutions and facilities. He was the first African-American to be placed on the Supreme Court from 1967 to 1991. www.biography.com

18th MP Headquarters Company gets new commander

Pfc. Daniel D. Blottenberger
18th Military Police Brigade Public Affairs Office

MANNHEIM, Germany—The 18th Military Police Brigade Assistant Training Officer took command of the Brigade Headquarters Company in a change of command ceremony February 1 at the Coleman Barracks gymnasium here.

Capt. Brian J. Boston succeeded Capt. Wayne R. Ludwig who has been reassigned as the brigade's Logistics Officer in charge. He was assigned as the brigade's Assistant Training Officer prior to taking command.

Boston enlisted in the Army Reserves in 1995 as an MP in the 4249th MP Company in Pocahontas, Iowa. His other assignments include platoon leader in the 511th MP Company at Fort Drum, N.Y., and Plans and Exercises officer, as well as battalion logistics officer in the 10th MP



Pfc. Daniel D. Blottenberger

From left to right Capt. Brian J. Boston stands at parade rest next to former commander of HHC of the 18th MP Brigade Capt. Wayne R Ludwig.



Pfc. Daniel D. Blottenberger

Col. James Brown hands the HHC guidon to incoming commander Capt. Brian J. Boston.

Battalion at Fort Drum. He received a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice at the University of Nebraska in Omaha and was commissioned second lieutenant at Creighton University, also in Omaha, in May 2000. Boston's military education includes the Basic Military Police Course, Primary Leadership Development Course, Military Police Officer Basic Course, Military Police Captain's Career Course, Combined Arms and Services Staff School, and Air Assault

School.

His years of military experience and education including a deployment each to Afghanistan and Iraq provide a solid foundation for the makings of a successful leader. Boston spoke about lessons learned and his vision for the future. "I've seen how difficult it is for soldiers to accomplish their brigade level tasks, yet fulfill all the training requirements they need to survive in combat. I've seen the brigade headquarters in garrison and combat, along with all the lessons that have come with that. Many soldiers are leaving soon, but I will stay and carry on those lessons I've



Pfc. Daniel Blottenberger

Capt. Brian J. Boston addresses the crowd during his first speech as HHC commander.

witnessed.”

“Right now, we are watching many soldiers move on. The unit will be receiving many new soldiers with open arms and we will, without a doubt, train them up for the next go round with any enemy. As a headquarters, we must be clever on how we train individually on warrior tasks at company level, yet set the conditions for success in our collective tasks and daily missions at brigade level. So the bottom line is training and resourcing to win in combat,” said Boston.

Boston says he is focused on his mission as company commander and that his time spent with the 18th thus far was time well spent and feels his experience in the 18th will serve as a major benefit to his future success.

“My experience with the brigade has set me up with the right focus on what the Army is about and what small units need to do. There have been many great mentors who have served in this headquarters. I hope to continue their legacy.

One such mentor, said Boston, is his predecessor, Wayne Ludwig. As a company commander for

nearly two years with one year leading troops in combat operations in Iraq, Ludwig says he has learned a thing or two and has a few words of advice to offer.

“Know your soldiers,” said Ludwig. “Find out what you can do to make their lives better both personally and professionally.”

Ludwig said he was thankful for the great support he received during his time as commander and wishes the same for his successor. “I am confident that Capt. Boston will lead the company on the right path especially with the great support the HHC has within its personnel.”

Boston’s awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Army Commendation Medal with one oak-leaf cluster, Army Achievement Medal, Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal

with Bronze Star, Iraqi Campaign Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, NCO Professional Development Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, Air Assault Badge and German Armed Forces Badge for Military Proficiency in Gold. Boston is married to the former Kristene M. Pfeiler of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. They have one son named Evan.

.....



Pfc. Daniel Blottenberger

Awaiting Orders

The 18th MP brigade Headquarters Company, led by 1st Sgt. Michael C. Arbec, await orders from their new company commander, Capt. Brian J. Boston following a change-of-command ceremony at Coleman Barracks gymnasium in Mannheim February 1.

Think Safety First!

An Apple A Day Keeps The Doctor Away! We have all heard that old saying again and again. We may have even practiced it occasionally. What we are actually doing is called taking preventive measures or steps. The same way we take preventive measures by using the five-step Risk Management Process. We use this process to **reduce** or **eliminate** our chances of something **bad** happening to us. This five-step process can be used in all aspects of our lives, both on and off duty.

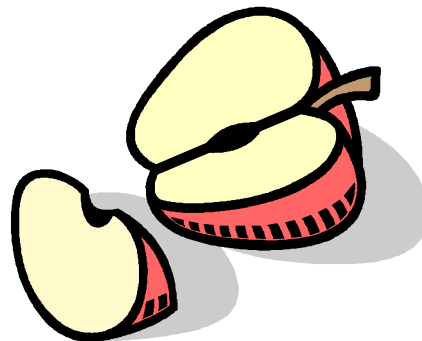


You might think it's too complicated to go through the five-step Risk Management Process.

Before you get in your car or on your motorcycle for a short to the store; just remember, most accidents happen within a few miles of home. You might also think that it's a pain to go through the five-step Risk Management Process in preparation for a mission. However, it's a proven fact that the proper application of the five-step Risk Management Process saves lives!

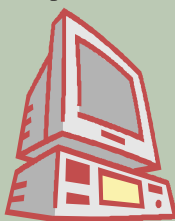
You cannot always stop accidents from happening, but you can reduce your chances of being in an accident, both on and off duty by **Stopping, Thinking, Observing, Planning and Proceeding with SAFETY!**

Got a question with safety or need information? Contact your Brigade Safety Manager Mr. Robert Myrick at 382-5629 or email: myrickr@hq18mp.mannheim.army.mil



The All Army Sports Program

The All Army Sports Program offers Soldier/athletes the opportunity to participate in over 20 sports at an Armed Forces or higher level of competition. Interested participants can go to the Army MWR web site at www.armymwr.com, select Recreation and click on the Army Sports link to see what sports are available and view the criteria for selection. The DA Sports Office has implemented a new procedure for applying to the All Army Sports Program. There is now an on-line application process. The new All-Army On-line application program is a web-based information system that will allow any Soldier (CONUS or OCONUS), with internet access, to apply for any All Army sport on-line. Soldiers simply need to go to <https://armysports.cfsc.army.mil> for a direct link to the All Army application process. This link will also give you detailed information about the program, the year's calendar, selection criteria, and points of contact at the DA Sports office.



I wanna be cowboy...



Sgt. Doug Krietemeyer looks like he's having fun as he braves a ride on a mechanical bull at The Cove club on Sullivan Barracks in Mannheim. The bull was part of an afternoon of food and entertainment put together for the 18th MP Brigade soldiers and families following their welcome home ceremony January 26.

Photo by Pfc. Daniel D. Blottenberger



Why an Easter 'bunny'?

Quite a few pagan cultures hold celebrations in the spring. It's the time of year when plants return to life after being dormant all winter and when animals mate and procreate. These festivities celebrate the renewal of life and promote the fertility of crops, animals and even people, which was important in these agrarian communities. The Saxons believed in a maiden goddess of fertility named Eastre or Eostre (Oestre in Latin) and honored her with a spring festival. Hares and rabbits were considered sacred to Eastre because they are notoriously fertile animals.

In the second century A.D., Christian missionaries tried to convert northern European tribes. To help make Christianity attractive, the missionaries turned pagan festivals into Christian holidays. The pagan Eastre festival occurred around the same time as the Christian celebration marking Christ's resurrection so the two celebrations blended into one, rabbit and all.

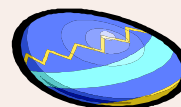
Over time, Eastre became Easter, and the symbolism changed as well. Instead of the Easter rabbit

symbolizing fertility, the rabbit may symbolize an innocent, vulnerable creature that can be sacrificed, similar to the lamb. To Christians, these innocents are tokens of Christ and the sacrifice he made.

The Easter bunny we know today was influenced by German traditions dating back to the 1500s. German children believed that the *Oschter Haws* (a magical rabbit) would leave them a nest of colored eggs at Easter time if they were good. Pennsylvania Dutch settlers brought this tradition to America in the 1700s.

On a related note, eggs have long been a symbol of rebirth and thus associated with spring celebrations. In the 600s, Pope Gregory the Great forbade the eating of eggs during Lent (the 40 days proceeding Easter) and this helped make eggs a special treat at Easter. Many European cultures also have old customs of decorating eggs and giving them as gifts.

www.ask.yahoo.com



St. Patrick's Day



St. Patrick's Day is celebrated on March 17, a religious feast day and the anniversary of the death of St. Patrick, the Patron Saint of Ireland in the fifth century. The Irish have observed this day as a religious holiday for thousands of years.

On St. Patrick's Day, which falls during the Christian season of Lent, Irish families would traditionally attend church in the morning and celebrate in the afternoon. Lenten prohibitions against the consumption of meat were waived and people would dance, drink and feast on the traditional meal of Irish bacon and cabbage.

The first St. Patrick's Day parade took place not in Ireland, but in the United States. Irish soldiers serving in the English military marched through New York City on March 17, 1762. Along with their music, the parade helped soldiers to reconnect with their Irish roots, as well as fellow Irishmen serving in the English army.

Over the next thirty-five years, Irish patriotism among American immigrants flourished, prompting the rise of so-called "Irish Aid" societies, like the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick and the Hibernian Society. Each group would hold annual parades featuring bagpipes (which actually first became popular in the Scottish and British armies) and drums.

Today, St. Patrick's Day is celebrated by people of all backgrounds in the United States, Canada and Australia. Although North America is home to largest productions, St. Patrick's Day has been celebrated in other locations far from Ireland, including Japan, Singapore and Russia.

In modern-day Ireland, St. Patrick's Day has traditionally been a religious occasion. In fact, up until the 1970s, Irish laws mandated that pubs be closed on March 17. Beginning in 1995, however, the Irish government began a national campaign to use St. Patrick's Day as an opportunity to drive tourism and showcase Ireland to the rest of the world.

www.historychannel.com

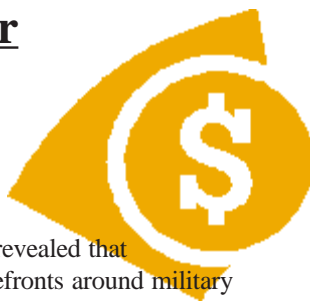
TIDBITS

Financial Insider

'Loan-Shark' Lenders-

A recent study of 15,000 payday lenders in more than 13,000 ZIP codes in 20 states that host military installations revealed that payday lenders open their storefronts around military installations. DOD has launched a new effort to educate servicemembers about the dangers of borrowing from "loan-shark" lending companies and to teach them how to avoid ending up in a spiral of compounding debt. The most prevalent type of loan-shark lending affecting military personnel is what is known as "payday loans," said John M. Molino, deputy undersecretary of defense for military community and family policy." A payday loan is essentially a plug - money that gets you from today to the next payday so you can cover your bills." Molino also said, DOD is taking steps, such as hosting fairs at military installations, to educate military members about the dangers of payday loans and familiarize them with ways to put themselves and their families on a sound financial footing. "We can make soldiers smarter," he said. "We can make them better consumers; we can teach them how to save for a rainy day, so when they need to borrow they can and pay themselves back, at no interest."

www.militarymoney.com



Websites

Download one of the hottest PC games around!

America's Army-The Official U.S. Army Game The U.S. Army has developed a highly realistic and innovative PC video game called *America's Army*. The game offers outstanding graphics and depicts realistic features including units, military training exercises and career opportunities. To find out more, and to download, go to: www.americasarmy.com

Legal Tips

Vehicle Registration-

Military members who have registered or licensed their solely owned motor vehicle in their home state need not register it in their duty state because of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act. A soldier cannot avoid registering in the duty state based on registration in a third state that is neither the member's home state nor duty state. Non-military family members must register their individually owned vehicles where they live, usually in the member's duty state. A state could require that a dependent family member comply with its registration requirements even though a jointly owned car is registered in the service member's state of domicile. If the vehicle is not registered in the military member's state of domicile, the state of temporary residence may require registration and refuse to recognize an out-of-state registration. Selection of state registration should be carefully considered, taking into account relative license fees, sales and excise taxes, effect of personal property tax, driver's license, inspection license and other factors. US Army Europe automobile registration and operators licenses are required in Germany even if the military member has a license from, and registered his vehicle in his state of domicile.

www.jagcnet2.army.mil



At right is a screen shot of the first training map. The player must first go through four training maps in order to advance in the game.

